

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 311616
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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 311616

STADIS/////////
EXDIS

FOL REPEAT WARSAW 9128 ACTION SECSTATE DTD 23DEC.

QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L

STADIS

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PFOR, PL
SUBJECT: POLISH DISSIDENT APPEAL

REF: (A) MUNICH 3095, (B) STATE 307291, (C) WARSAW 8477,
(D) WARSAW 8844, (E) WARSAW 8658

1. SUMMARY. WE ARE SYMPATHETIC IN PRINCIPLE TO PORTIONS OF
MICHNIK'S APPEAL (REF A), BUT WE QUESTION ITS PREMISES AND
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 STATE 311616

THE MAIN ONE OF ITS TWO RECOMMENDATIONS. OUR PROBLEM HAS TO
DO WITH THE REGIME'S POLICIES IN DEALING WITH CURRENT DISSENT,
THE NATURE OF THE WORKERS DEFENSE LEAGUE, AND ITS PLACE IN
THE POLISH DISSENT MOVEMENT. END SUMMARY

2. MICHNIK AND HIS COLLEAGUES SEEM TO BE ARGUING THAT GIEREK'S

CAPITULATION TO THE POPULAR MOOD LAST JUNE NEED NOT LEAD TO HIS POLITICAL SUICIDE OR TO A SERIOUS LOSS OF FACE. WHILE WE AGREE WITH THE FORMER, WE CANNOT AGREE THAT THE FIRST SECRETARY HAS NOT EXPERIENCED A SERIOUS EMBARRASSMENT OR THAT HIS STANDING WAS UNIMPAIRED AS A RESULT OF THE PRICE-RISE FIASCO. AS OUR REPORTING HAS POINTED OUT (REF C AND D), GIEREK'S POSITION HAS BEEN SEVERELY COMPROMISED, AND HE IS HANGING ON TO POWER TO A LARGE EXTENT SIMPLY BECAUSE NO ALTERNATIVE LEADER HAS APPEARED ON THE SCENE. BY THE SAME TOKEN, THE POLICY PRESCRIPTION HE HAS CHOSEN TO DEAL WITH HIS PLIGHT (REF E) IS THE ONLY PRACTICABLE ONE OFFERING ANY HOPE OF RECAPTURING SOME OF THE LIMITED POPULARITY HE ENJOYED IN THE PAST AND PROVIDING SOME MOMENTUM TO THE COUNTRY'S ECONOMY. WHETHER THIS POLICY WILL SUCCEED IS OPEN TO QUESTION, BUT ITS VERY SELECTION SHOWS THAT GIEREK IS PREPARED TO GO TO CONSIDERABLE LENGTHS TO AVOID FURTHER ALIENATION OF THE POLISH POPULATION. ALSO, HIS IMMEDIATE REACTION TO THE JUNE DEMONSTRATIONS SHOULD BE SEPARATED FROM GIEREK'S SUBSEQUENT HANDLING OF THOSE ARRESTED AND THOSE WHO HAVE SINCE SPOKEN OUT AGAINST HIM. IN BOTH RESPECTS, HOWEVER, HE HAS SHOWN RESTRAINT, NOT OUT OF SYMPATHY FOR HIS OPPONENTS, BUT RATHER FROM FEAR OF FURTHER VIOLENCE. THEREFORE, WE CANNOT AGREE THAT THERE IS A "NEW SITUATION" IN POLAND, CERTAINLY NOT OF THE SORT MICHNIK AND HIS FRIENDS ARE SUGGESTING: OF STEPPED-UP REPRESSION.

3. WE ARE NOT BLIND TO EXAMPLES OF POLICE BRUTALITY AND REPRESSION, AND INDEED WE THINK THE USG AND RFE OUGHT TO DEPLORE SUCH ACTIONS AS THEY BECOME KNOWN. OUR PROBLEM IS RATHER WITH THE ASSERTION THAT THEY ARE WIDESPREAD AND THAT THEY REFLECT THE POLICY INSTRUMENT CHOSEN BY THE GIEREK
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 STATE 311616

LEADERSHIP TO DEAL WITH ITS OPPONENTS.

4. AS FOR THE WORKERS DEFENSE LEAGUE (WDL), IT HAS BECOME THE MOST VISIBLE OF THE VARIOUS DISSIDENT GROUPS ACTIVE IN POLAND. IT HAS CAPTURED WESTERN MEDIA ATTENTION THROUGH THE PROMINENCE OF SOME OF ITS MEMBERS AND ITS ACCESS TO THE EUROPEAN AND AMERICAN PRESS. ITS OBJECTIVES ARE LIMITED, HOWEVER, AND WERE DESIGNED INITIALLY TO OBTAIN RELEASE AND REHABILITATION OF WORKERS ARRESTED LAST JUNE AT RADOM AND IN THE URSUS TRACTOR FACTORY. THE LEAGUE HAS SINCE TAKEN ON THE TASK OF PROVIDING HELP AND DEFENSE FOR VICTIMS OF REPRESSION AND OF SPREADING NEWS OF THE ILLEGAL ACTIONS OF THE POLISH AUTHORITIES. ITS ACTIVE MEMBERSHIP INCLUDES SEVERAL PROMINENT POLES, BUT ITS NUMBERS ARE FEW, PROBABLY LESS THAN THIRTY. NO ONE REALLY KNOWS THE ATTITUDE TOWARD IT OF ITS ADOPTED CONSTITUENCY, THE POLISH WORKERS. ONE PROMINENT PZPR CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEMBER WHO IN THE PAST HAS SPOKEN HIS MIND FREELY HAS SAID THAT THE WDL LACKS INFLUENCE WITH THE

WORKERS AND IS NOT CONSIDERED A THREAT BY THE AUTHORITIES. THIS OPINION WAS ECHOED BY A FORMER CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEMBER, WHO ADDED THAT AT BEST THE LEAGUE IS FOLLOWING WORKER OPINION RATHER THAN LEADING IT. OTHER INFORMED POLES REMIND US OF THE WARINESS WITH WHICH POLISH WORKERS AND INTELLECTUALS HAVE TRADITIONALLY EYED EACH OTHER, AND MOST QUESTION THE LIKLIHOOD OF A TRUE CONVERGENCE OF INTERESTS BETWEEN THE TWO GROUPS IN POLAND'S PRESENT PREDICAMENT. IT IS ALSO NOTEWORTHY THAT THE CHURCH, ALTHOUGH PROCLAIMING SYMPATHY FOR THE GOALS OF THE WDL, IS NEVERTHELESS KEEPING A CERTAIN DISTANCE BETWEEN ITSELF AND THE ORGANIZATION.

5. IN SHORT, WE SEE THE WDL AS AN IMPORTANT BUT NOT NECESSARILY THE DOMINANT DISSIDENT GROUP IN POLAND. ITS EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE JUSTICE FOR THOSE VICTIMIZED BY THE REGIME AND TO NUDGE THE AUTHORITIES TOWARD A MORE LIBERAL AND HUMANE SYSTEM ARE TO BE APPLAUDED. BUT IT IS ONE OF A NUMBER OF GROUPS AROUND WHICH WIDESPREAD UNHAPPINESS IS COAL-

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 STATE 311616

ESCING, AND ITS MEMBERS HAVE NOT BEEN HASSLED ANY MORE THAN OTHER DISSIDENTS. MORE IMPORTANTLY, AS STATED ABOVE, WE DO NOT AGREE THAT THE REGIME HAS EMBARKED ON A DELIBERATE POLICY OF REPRESSION AGAINST DISSIDENTS. THE VERY OPENNESS WITH WHICH OPPOSITION IS EXPRESSED IN TODAY'S POLAND IS INDICATIVE OF THIS. THE AUTHORITIES COULD DECIDE TO CLAMP DOWN ONCE AND FOR ALL, BUT SO FAR THEY HAVE NOT.

6. TURNING TO THE SPECIFICS OF MICHNIK'S APPEAL, WE SEE NOT PROBLEM WITH INCLUDING SOME COMMITTEE MEMBERS IN EMBASSY SOCIAL FUNCTIONS. WE HAVE DONE THIS IN THE PAST AND WILL DO SO IN THE FUTURE. IF "GESTURES" ARE SOUGHT, MICHNIK MIGHT BE REMINDED OF OUR WILLINGNESS TO FINANCE THE RECENT TRIP TO THE US OF PROFESSOR EDWARD LIPINSKI. IN ADDITION, IVP GRANTS ARE NOW IN THE WORKS FOR RUDOLPH BUCHALA AND JANUSZ ZABLOCKI, BOTH PROMINENT MEMBERS OF OTHER DISSIDENT GROUPS. WE ARE ALSO RECOMMENDING GRANTS TO WELL-KNOWN DISSIDENTS HENRYK KRZECZLOWSKI, TADEUSZ MAZOWIECKI AND WLADYSLAW BAROSZEWSKI.

7. WHAT WE ARE PARTICULARLY CHARY OF IS MICHNIK'S SUGGESTION THAT WE CONTRIVE AN EXPRESSION OF OFFICIAL USG "INTEREST" IN POLAND'S DOMESTIC SITUATION. OBVIOUSLY WE ARE INTERESTED, AND WE WOULD HAVE NO TROUBLE WITH SUCH AN EXPRESSION IF IT WERE APPLIED TO THE GENERAL SCENE HERE, OR TO THE PROBLEM OF REPRESSION IN THE USSR AND EASTERN EUROPE AS A WHOLE. BUT AN INDICATION OF "INTEREST" IMPLYING THAT WE THINK THAT GIEREK AND COMPANY HAVE ADOPTED REPRESSION AND BRUTALITY AS PRIMARY MEASURES FOR DEALING WITH DISSIDENCE SIMPLY DOES NOT SQUARE WITH THE FACTS AS WE SEE THEM.

8. THE TRUTH IS THAT THE REGIME DOES NOT KNOW WHAT TO DO ABOUT ITS LOW STANDING IN THE POLISH PUBLIC'S ESTEEM. IT TOOK ALMOST SIX MONTHS OF FLOUNDERING TO DECIDE ON A STRATEGY TO DEAL WITH ITS PRICE SNAFU OF LAST SUMMER, AND THERE IS MUCH EVIDENCE THAT THE SAME UNCERTAINTIES ARE AT WORK RIGHT NOW
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 05 STATE 311616

ON THE DISSIDENT QUESTION. WHILE THIS PROCESS GOES ON, WE RECOMMEND AGAINST SENDING SIGNALS TO THE WDL. THEY COULD BE COUNTERPRODUCTIVE BY ENCOURAGING THOSE IN THE LEADERSHIP LOOKING FOR "PERNICIOUS WESTERN MEDDLING" IN THIS TIME OF UNCERTAINTY AS AN EXCUSE TO TIGHTEN THE SCREWS.
BROWN

UNQUOTE ROBINSON

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